

**DOMESTIC ABUSE, HOUSING AND
HOMELESSNESS IN SCOTLAND: AN EVIDENCE
REVIEW**

**Scottish Government
Communities Analytical Services
September 2010**

Analytical Paper Series

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Summary

Statutory protection for women and children experiencing and fleeing domestic abuse is relatively strong in Scotland, providing legal entitlement to homelessness assessment and to housing. However, there is a lack of evidence of the extent to which the provision of accommodation and support, including re-housing support is meeting the needs of women and children facing domestic abuse in Scotland.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HOMELESSNESS

- There were 53,681 recorded incidents of domestic abuse in 2008-2009.
- Domestic abuse has long been recognised as a major contributory factor to homelessness. Research and official statistics show that women are more likely to be victims and to report related loss of accommodation.
- A *violent or abusive* dispute within the household was the fourth most common reason for all homelessness applications in 2008-2009 (6,160, 11%). 74% citing this as the main reason are from women, comprising single women at 34% or single women with children (40%).
- Households *fleeing domestic violence or abuse* accounted for 13% (4,665) of all priority need homelessness assessments.
- Many commentators note the limitations of official homelessness statistics as an accurate picture of the association between domestic abuse and homelessness.

DOMESTIC ABUSE, HOUSING OUTCOMES & SUPPORT

- Refuges have traditionally been the main response to supporting women threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse. Studies have shown that shortages in provision could be problematic for access in a preferred location and inadequate provision to meet needs may contribute to repeat homelessness.
- A study found that obtaining exclusion orders with adequate force to protect women while they remain in the family home was difficult because of limited victim-centred legal processes and professional attitudes. There is a lack of evidence on the extent to which women in Scotland are enabled to remain in the family home.
- Official statistics show that the majority of women fleeing domestic abuse and presenting as homeless secured permanent accommodation, the majority securing a local authority tenancy. Temporary accommodation was only offered to around 1% of women with children fleeing a *violent or abusive* dispute.
- There is a lack of evidence on the homelessness outcomes and accommodation provision for perpetrator and male victims of domestic abuse.
- 27% of priority need cases stating their main reason *as fleeing domestic abuse* also identified a support need. The most common support need was a mental health problem followed by basic housing management and living skills. Single women fleeing domestic abuse were also more likely to identify support for drug or alcohol dependency.

INTRODUCTION

There has been little research on the relationship between domestic abuse, housing and homelessness, especially in the Scottish context. This review provides some secondary analysis of relevant homelessness and housing statistics to provide a more in-depth overview of the scale of domestic abuse as a contributory factor to homelessness in Scotland.

The review considers the housing factors and support that are available to women and children at risk of homelessness as a consequence of domestic abuse. **Section 1** examines housing policy and legislative developments designed to address the consequences of domestic abuse on the lives of women, children and young people. **Section 2** outlines the relationship between domestic abuse and homelessness. **Section 3** explores the evidence on the housing support needs of women, children and young people. **Section 4** concludes by identifying the key gaps in the existing evidence base.

The review will be used to inform the evidence base for Priority 8 of the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People to:

Reduce the risk to women and children of becoming homeless as a consequence of domestic abuse and ensure, wherever necessary, they are supported to make the move to safe and suitable accommodation without facing additional emotional economic or social disadvantage.

It is important to note that this review is not systematic or comprehensive. It has been carried out within a relatively short timeframe and therefore does not include all the available evidence.

SECTION ONE: THE HOUSING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Since devolution, domestic abuse has been recognised and prioritised by the then Scottish Executive through the establishment of the Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse resulting in the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland. The widespread nature of domestic abuse was acknowledged as a problem affecting not only women, but children too, with debates framed around support, choices and needs:

All women and children who experience abuse must receive support and services to enable them to identify their needs, to make choices and to have these needs addressed as well as to participate in developing services to address their needs in the future. It should be recognised that children require services which meet their specific needs (Scottish Executive 2000).

By 2006, as part of the 'Getting it Right for Every Child Implementation Plan' (2006a) the Scottish Executive announced the 'Domestic Abuse Better Outcomes for Children Pathfinder Pilot Projects', with 'new ways of ensuring agencies work together to provide better support and intervention for children affected by domestic abuse to be piloted across Scotland' (Scottish Executive 2006c).

Following the establishment of the pilots in 2006, a National Delivery Group for Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse was established and responsible for their monitoring. In June 2008, the group published the 'National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan for Children and Young People' a three-year delivery plan¹ for engaging young people experiencing domestic abuse and promoting good practice.

Action under **Priority Area 8** of this plan will focus, in the short-term, on improving understanding through identifying the barriers which prevent women and children from accessing appropriate levels of coordinated support to stay safely in their own homes or to make the move into alternative accommodation without facing additional economic or social disadvantages. From this evidence base, future action will focus on developing measures which enable local authorities and relevant agencies to deliver better joined-up responses to the housing and support needs of those affected by domestic abuse.

More recently, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) published a joint report, 'Safer Lives: Changed Lives A Shared Approach to Tackling Violence Against Women in Scotland' which promotes a shared approach and understanding to guide the work of all partners. This includes Community Planning Partnerships' and Local Authorities under the

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/17115558/0>

terms of the Concordat and to support joined-up policy and practice around the issues of:

- **Prevention:** to prevent, remove or diminish the risk of violence against women and its impacts on children and young people;
- **Protection:** to protect women from victimisation, repeat victimisation or harassment by perpetrators and protect the children and young people affected;
- **Provision:** to provide adequate services to deal with the consequences of violence against women and children to help them to rebuild their lives, **and**
- **Participation;** to ensure policy making and practice development around violence against women is shaped by experience, needs and views of those who use services.

A thorough examination of national policies and strategies concerning tackling domestic abuse can be found in the following publications:

Communities Analytical Services (2010) Reporting on Progress Towards Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men Made by Public Authorities in Scotland: Ministerial Priorities for Gender Equality: Tackling Violence Against Women: A Review of Key Evidence and National Policies. Scottish Government.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/01135334/0>

Reid Howie Associates (2010) Reporting on Progress Towards Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men Made by Public Authorities in Scotland: Ministerial Priorities for Gender Equality: Tackling Violence Against Women. Scottish Government.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/01091611/13>

Domestic Abuse & Housing Legislation/Policy

In Scotland, housing and homelessness legislation provides protection for some groups by allowing priority access to social housing. This includes women fleeing domestic abuse who are defined as *unintentionally homeless*. The following section summarises the legal rights of women in this situation.

Scottish Housing Legislation

Prior to the introduction of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003, a two tier system operated for women in terms of priority need. Women *with* children who experienced domestic *violence* were a recognised priority category in practice, as defined by Section 25 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. However, women *without* children did not have the automatic priority but could be assessed under Section 25 as 'a person who is vulnerable as a result of...or other special reason'.

The 1997 Homelessness Guidance however, went some way towards reducing this distinction by stating that 'women suffering, or in fear of, violence may be vulnerable even if they have no children'. By 1999 it seemed that the vast

majority of local authorities in Scotland followed this advice. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 strengthened the rights of homeless households more generally and introduced a requirement for local authorities to produce homeless strategies which could be integrated with their domestic abuse strategies.

The progression of the housing legislative framework continued with the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003, which further increased the safety net for homeless households, including phased expansion of the priority need categories leading to eventual abolition of priority need in 2012. This expansion included 'persons at risk of domestic abuse' as a priority category, making this priority explicit. The Act also defined domestic *abuse* by referring to the meaning set out in the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001:

'abuse' includes violence, harassment, threatening conduct, and any other conduct giving rise, or likely to give rise, to physical or mental injury, fear, alarm or distress;
'conduct' includes-
a) speech; and
b) presence in a specified place or area'.

This recognised that domestic abuse should include therefore, persons experiencing non-violent domestic abuse and abuse is interpreted as extending beyond physical violence to included threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional).

Shelter and Scottish Women's Aid point out² that these developments mean that the statutory protection provided by the housing legislation for women experiencing domestic abuse is now relatively robust. Women who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse now have legal claims to entitlement to housing. The problem lies in the *gap in housing provision* to meet this legal entitlement and difficulties women and their families' face in accessing housing services.

Local Authority Policies and Procedures

It has not been possible within the constraints of this evidence review to evaluate the policies of all local authorities or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland and no systematic reviews have been found that have done so. It is clear however, that there is considerable discretion provided for in the legislation that is exercised by local authority housing services in practice. Research by Edgar in 2003³ identified some examples of local authorities that have adopted COSLA Guidance on Preparing and Implementing a Multi-Agency Strategy to Tackle Violence against Women (1998) to develop corporate strategies and to guide procedures within service departments including housing services. More

² Shelter & Scottish Women's Aid (2005) *Practitioner article- Domestic abuse and homelessness legislation.*

³ Edgar., B., Williams, N. McMahon, L and McAvoy, S (2003) *Sustaining Tenancies Following Domestic Abuse.* Joint Centre for Scottish Housing Research, Scottish Women's Aid.

recent analysis⁴ of local authority Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) however found that:

- Nine local authorities made no reference to domestic abuse against women *at all* within their SOAs.
- Only five made specific reference to domestic abuse as *a priority* and had developed outcomes they wanted to achieve.
- 21 local authorities made no specific commitment to addressing domestic abuse with their local partnerships.

Civil Remedies

The other key housing-related legislation intended to assist abused women is the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection (Scotland) Act 1981. This legislation provides orders excluding⁵ violent parents from the family home and for interdicts⁶ restraining their behaviour including with powers of arrest (the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001 now provides a simpler procedure for obtaining powers of arrest).

There is evidence to suggest that these orders are rarely used effectively.⁷ In reality, it is difficult to obtain an exclusion order that has the adequate force to protect women while they remain in the matrimonial home due to a lack of victim-centred legal processes, and even when orders have been obtained, they are often not enforced adequately.⁸ Moreover, recent evidence⁹ suggests that Sanctuary Scheme, users for example, were not willing to pursue legal remedies through civil or criminal process such as exclusion orders, as many worried that this might anger the perpetrator and make the situation worse, whilst others felt that the perpetrators would simply ignore the interdicts or sanctions.

⁴ Scottish Women's Aid (2008) *Analysis of Local Authority Single Outcome Agreements 2008*.

⁵ A married woman can apply to the court for **an exclusion order** if her husband's behaviour has been, or she fear it will be, injurious to her own or her children's physical or mental health. If it has been granted her husband will be given a few days to move out of the home. The exclusion order lasts until the marriage ends by death or divorce, or until it is recalled by the court. If the woman moves house the exclusion order is no longer valid. A cohabiting woman who is sole owner or tenant does not need to apply for an exclusion order, unless her partner has had occupancy rights granted. A cohabiting woman whose partner is the sole owner must apply to court for occupancy rights at the same time as applying for an exclusion order.

⁶ Women at risk of violence to themselves or their children can apply for **an interdict** with a power of arrest attached. Women can get an interdict with a power of arrest if they are married to their abuser; are cohabiting and jointly own or rent their home with their partner; are cohabiting with a partner who is sole owner or tenant and the woman has been granted occupancy rights by the court. An interdict can also be taken out after a woman has left her partner or even while they are still living together, if she does not want to have him put out of the house or to leave herself. Why would she get an interdict if they were still living together and she doesn't want to put him out of the house?

⁷ Shelter & Scottish Women's Aid (2005) *Practitioner article- Domestic abuse and homelessness legislation*.

⁸ Sharp, C., (2008) *City of Edinburgh Council Safe As Houses Evaluation* as part of Scottish Government Homelessness Prevention Innovation Fund Evaluation. Unpublished report.

⁹ Jones, A., Bretherton, J., and Croucher, K. (unpublished at time of writing- draft copy 2009) *The effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their own homes*. Department of Communities and Local Government- early sight.

In the context of access to housing, there is some evidence that in the early 1990's, particular local authorities used the existence of these civil rights highlighted above to deny abused women assistance under the homelessness legislation (finding them to be intentionally homeless if they did not exercise them).¹⁰ The Homelessness Code of Guidance made it clear however, that this practice was unacceptable. Women and children cannot be assumed to be safe whilst remaining in the family home even if the abuser is legally excluded. Evidence suggests that few local authorities persisted with this practice even as far back as 1994. In the Scottish Women's Aid's response to the consultation on the Ministerial Statement on the Abolition of Priority Need they recommended commissioning research to identify why exclusion orders are not successfully implemented and make recommendations to ensure they become a practical tool to allow women, children and young people to remain in their homes safely. At the time of writing, Scottish Women's Aid are undertaking research into the use of exclusion orders.

Homelessness Prevention Policy

More recently, homelessness prevention policy and the needs of specific high risk groups such as those suffering from domestic abuse, has gained impetus. Another element of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to prepare strategies for preventing and alleviating homelessness. Since the introduction of this Act, prevention is playing a central role in the ways that homelessness is tackled and for achieving the 2012 abolition of priority need target. In June 2009, the Scottish Government and COSLA's prevention of Homelessness Guidance¹¹ was published in order to give more clarity on acceptable interventions due to concerns from Local Authorities that some prevention activities could be interpreted as "gate keeping".¹² The guidance recognises those suffering from domestic abuse as a particular high risk group for homelessness prevention and pre-crisis activity. It sets out the following good practice guidance in relation to responding to these risks:

- Social landlords should review and where necessary amend allocation and transfer policies to ensure they meet good practice and consider if rent arrears and repairs procedures are unfairly penalising women affected by domestic abuse issues.
- Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) should liaise with specialist support agencies such as Women's Aid groups to ensure that women are able to access appropriate legal advice and that they have support to engage with it to seek appropriate legal remedies.
- Good practice principles for engaging with women affected by domestic abuse should lead to the development of guidance for staff, for example, interviewing techniques and an emphasis on sensitivity and confidentiality.

¹⁰ Shelter & Scottish Women's Aid (2005) *Practitioner article- Domestic abuse and homelessness legislation.*

¹¹ Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (2009) *Prevention of Homelessness Guidance.*

¹² Gate keeping has been described as the practice of preventing or discouraging people from making homelessness applications as opposed to preventing homelessness from occurring.

- It also states that it is likely to be helpful in cases of domestic abuse to include a clause in allocations policy for housing the perpetrator of the abuse should they apply for re-housing.
- Joint multi-agency training on the causes and impacts of domestic abuse is viewed as particularly successful.

The guidance cites two best practice examples which are detailed below. One of these, Edinburgh Safe as Houses, aimed to keep women within their existing accommodation, whilst the other, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, focussed more on sharing knowledge and taking action on the basis of this.

Edinburgh Safe as Houses¹³ A project funded by the Homelessness Prevention Innovation Fund developed by the City of Edinburgh Council to assist in preventing homelessness for vulnerable women and children who are at risk of domestic abuse. It was broadly based on advice, support and practical safety measure and adaptations to their existing accommodation. Safe as Houses was the first sanctuary scheme for women experiencing domestic violence in Scotland. The project was developed as part of an advice-led approach to homelessness prevention in the city and by using the housing option interview approach, the project was keen to ensure that it should not be seen as a deterrent to presenting as homeless. The project was relatively small scale and was operational for eight months during 2007-2008. At time of writing the Edinburgh Safe as Houses service is not currently in operation, however, there are plans to have it up and running in the future as part of various mainstream work within the housing options service and in partnership with the community safety service rather than a specific service.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACS) In North Lanarkshire and Glasgow, MARACS bring together a wide range of agencies to discuss local cases and share knowledge and information about the victims and perpetrators. The most important aspect of the process is to agree the definitions of risk for women concerned and to act accordingly.

Supporting People and Domestic Abuse

Supporting People (SP) was an integrated policy and funding framework in Scotland designed to provide Housing Support Services to a range of vulnerable people over the age of 16, remain living in their own homes. This was administered as a ring fenced grant to Scottish local authorities who have the responsibility for assessing local need and providing these services, or purchasing Housing Support Services from external providers in order to meet these needs. From April 2008 the ring-fencing was removed from the Supporting People grant as was the requirement to report in detail on funding spent on Housing Support Services. The aim in removing ring fencing is to allow greater flexibility in the use of funding and lift unnecessary accounting and reporting

¹³ The *Edinburgh Safe as Houses* Evaluation is discussed on page 19/20.

burdens. Funding is now no longer restricted to the 21 prescribed housing support services.

Scottish Women's Aid has recently raised concerns about the removal of ring fencing from SP funding. SP from 2003 has been the only funding stream for the provision of a range of specialist domestic abuse housing support services in Scotland. As well as providing support services in refuge accommodation for women who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse, SP was also used to fund services to resettle women in their move into a new home and to support them while they remain in their community. Scottish Women's Aid have raised concerns that because this funding is no longer ring-fenced, some local authorities, left to local decision making, will fail to commission the necessary frontline services.

In 2007-08, 201,241 individuals were assisted through Supporting People funding¹⁴. The number of clients receiving housing support during 2007/8 for the client group 'people at risk of domestic violence' was 4,818, 2% of total people receiving housing support.¹⁵

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2008) Statistical Bulletin: *Supporting People Client Statistics 2007-2008*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

SECTION TWO: DOMESTIC ABUSE AND HOMELESSNESS

There is a large body of evidence, both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, which positions domestic abuse as a major contributory factor to homelessness. Although such abuse is sometimes perpetrated against men, women are far more likely to be victims and to report the consequential loss of accommodation.¹⁶ Action to prevent homelessness in such situations has traditionally concentrated on supporting victims who are fleeing domestic abuse rather than assisting the perpetrator. It has been out with the remit of this evidence review to look at evidence on the perpetrators of domestic abuse, but it is evident that the lack of policy attention has meant there is a lack of evidence on the provision of alternative accommodation and therefore homelessness outcomes *for perpetrators* and male victims of domestic abuse.

Scale of Domestic Abuse

The most recent official statistics¹⁷ on domestic abuse *recorded* by the police in Scotland show that there were 53,681 reported incidents of domestic abuse in 2008-2009 and is part of an increasing trend in reported incidents since 2000-2001. Recorded incidents involving female victims and male perpetrators represent 84% of all incidents, a percentage which has fallen from 91% since 2000-2001. This is mainly a result of an increase in the proportion of incidents with a male victim and female perpetrator, which has risen from 8% of all incidents in 2000-2001 to around 14% in 2008-2009. The overwhelming majority of these incidents took place in the home (89% of all incidents where the location was recorded). Domestic abuse was more likely if the victim and perpetrator cohabited, regardless of marital status (94% of all incidents where location was recorded). Two points are particularly important here. Firstly, that official statistics only reveal the number of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police and therefore do not reveal the real extent of the problem; and secondly, that domestic abuse is overwhelmingly a far greater problem for women than it is for men. In relation to both of these points, it is also worth highlighting the fact that children are also victims of domestic abuse such as witnessing direct abuse.

Within the literature, domestic abuse is understood as being associated with broader gender inequalities in society and male abuse of power, as well as being linked to other forms of male violence.¹⁸ Analysts have noted that housing interventions and homelessness policy responses to women generally need to be viewed in the context of larger social, economic and political processes which engender social constructions of homelessness and which tend to marginalise the issues affecting women. Specifically, women's differential access to housing,

¹⁶ See Davis, C., (2005) *Domestic Violence and housing: summary report*. University of Salford. Housing Corporation (2008) *Behind Closed Doors*. London: Housing Corporation.

¹⁷ Scottish Government (2009) *Statistical Bulletin: Crime & Justice Series- Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2008-2009*.

¹⁸ Hammer, J., and Itzin, C., and Quiad, S. (2000) *Home Truths About Domestic Violence: Feminist Influences and Policy and Practice. A Reader*. London. Routledge.

related to their relatively disadvantaged position in the labour market is a key consideration for understanding women and homelessness.¹⁹

Domestic abuse as a cause of homelessness

The Scottish HL1 Homelessness Statistics provide some indication of the scale of domestic abuse and its relationship to homelessness in Scotland. In 2008-2009, 57,193 applications were made to local authorities under the homelessness legislation in Scotland. All households making homelessness applications are asked to cite their main reason for applying. Table 1 below shows that a *violent or abusive dispute within the household* was the fourth most common reason for a homelessness application, comprising 11% (6,160) of all homeless applications. This represents a significant group of people. A *non violent dispute or relationship breakdown* in the household accounts for slightly more applications at 17% (9,841) and was the second most common reason. Household disputes then, are among the most commonly cited reasons for applications for homelessness, as illustrated in Table1.

¹⁹ Netto, G. Pawson., H. and Sharp, C (2009) 'Preventing homelessness due to domestic violence: providing a safe space or closing the door to new possibilities?' *Social Policy and Administration*, Vol. 43, No. 7, pp 719 – 735 (17).

Table 1: Main reason for making a homelessness application during 2008-09 by age of applicant for all households

Main reason for applying during 2008-09 by main age of applicant for all households							
	All households						% reasons
	16-17	18-20	21-24	25-retirement age	Over retirement age	All Households	
<i>Reason accommodation is longer available</i>							
Termination of tenancy / mortgage due to rent arrears / default on payments	25	176	429	2,472	55	3,157	6
Other action by landlord resulting in the termination of the tenancy	49	309	615	3,062	131	4,166	7
Applicant terminated secure accommodation	11	83	128	579	28	829	1
Loss of service / tied accommodation	2	19	62	313	26	422	1
Discharge from prison / hospital / care / other institution	114	185	360	1,992	32	2,683	5
Emergency (fire, flood, storm, closing order, etc)	3	17	41	251	41	353	1
Forced division and sale of matrimonial home	1	3	17	396	27	444	1
Other reason for loss of accommodation	130	236	326	1,812	98	2,602	5
<i>Reason for having to leave accommodation/household</i>							0
Dispute within household: violent or abusive	308	623	849	4,210	170	6,160	11
Dispute within household / relationship breakdown: non-violent	823	1,230	1,509	6,139	140	9,841	17
Fleeing non-domestic violence	38	158	275	1,182	15	1,668	3
Harassment	31	102	205	965	30	1,333	2
Overcrowding	91	271	257	632	9	1,260	2
Asked to leave	1,969	3,148	2,940	6,641	138	14,836	26
Other reason for leaving accommodation / household	454	872	1,114	4,775	224	7,439	13
All applications by main reason for application	4,049	7,432	9,127	35,421	1,164	57,193	100

Source: Homelessness Statistics Branch Analysis.

For household applications *with* children, illustrated in Table 2 below, the proportion citing household disputes as the main reason for homelessness application increases to 34% which includes 16% (2866) *citing a violent or abusive dispute* and 18% (3,312) *a non violent dispute* within the household. Indeed, disputes within the household are the most common reason for households *with* children making homelessness applications.

Table 2: Applications stating reasons for application was a dispute within the household/relationship breakdown non-violent or violent/abusive

Applications during 2008-09 stating violent or abusive dispute as being the main reason for applying by household type		
Total applications	6,160	100
Single person male	965	16
Single person female	2,083	34
Single parent male	164	3
Single parent female	2,461	40
Couple without children	73	1
Couple with children	48	1
Other household without children	173	3
Other household with children	193	3

Source: Homelessness Statistics Branch Analysis

Table 2 also highlights the gendered nature of domestic abuse, particularly those household disputes that are *violent or abusive* in nature. Specifically, 74% (4,544) of applications *citing violent or abusive disputes* as the main reason for homelessness are from women, comprising single women (34%) or single women with children (40%)

However, it is not possible to estimate how many of the 3,743 women in the chart above, *citing non-violent dispute* might also be objectively classified (on the basis of that defined in the Protection from Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001) as victims of domestic abuse, since subjectivity plays a major role in interpretation. Moreover, around two-thirds of these women who present as homeless due to a household dispute, have children, a group who have often been overlooked in discourses and policy around domestic abuse.

For applicants assessed *as priority*, local authorities record the reasons why the household has that status. In 2008-2009, households *fleeing domestic violence or abuse* accounted for 13% of all priority need cases (4,665). This was the fourth common reason for priority assessment. Again, the largest groups of those fleeing domestic violence or abuse were single female parents (39%) followed by single females (38%).

It has not been possible to gain any accurate statistics or information on the extent to which women and their children are enabled to remain in the family home, this is therefore highlighted as a key evidence gap.

Limitations of Homelessness Statistics

Many commentators note that official statistics are not an all-encompassing measure of the relationship between domestic abuse and homelessness. Statistics on homelessness do not present an accurate picture of the extent of the problem nor of its association with domestic abuse Netto *et al*²⁰ claim that domestic abuse *may* contribute to the loss of accommodation in some cases but that another factor may have been recorded as the main reason. Furthermore, many women losing their homes in such circumstances do not present immediately to local authorities but seek shelter with relatives and/or friends in the first instance, only seeking help later. Victims may also refer themselves directly to refuge provision from where, instead of making a homeless application, they may apply directly to a local authority housing register.²¹ Edgar *et al*²² also suggests that the number of women who present as homeless citing dispute with their partner is likely to be an under-estimate because a proportion of women will find accommodation by other means and a proportion will not mention this as a reason for their homelessness. Furthermore, many women living with family or friends as an immediate response will be likely to cite '*no longer able to live with family and friends*' rather than fleeing domestic abuse as a reason for their homelessness application.

Domestic abuse as trigger for youth homelessness

Domestic abuse is also a significant cause of youth homelessness. It is widely accepted that youth homelessness is a result of complex interactions between individual characteristics and experiences and wider structural factors. The youth homelessness literature consistently highlights the vulnerability of homeless teenagers, indicating that many have experienced family disruption, parental neglect or abuse, poverty, other forms of childhood trauma including domestic violence.²³ Most of the existing research on homeless young people has been qualitative until recently. Quantitative research²⁴ conducted by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York has provided robust evidence on the reasons and causes of youth homelessness.

²⁰ Preventing homelessness due to domestic violence: providing a safe space or closing the door to new possibilities?, IN Social Policy and Administration, Vol 43 No 7 Dec 2009, pp719-735

²¹ Jones., A (1998) *Out of Sight out of mind: women's homelessness*; CRISIS.

²² Edgar., B., Williams, N., McMahan., L (2003) *Sustaining Tenancies following Domestic Abuse*. Scottish Women's Aid.

²³ See Hutson, S. and Liddiard, M. (1994) *Youth Homelessness: The construction of a social issue*, London: MacMillan; Smith, J., Gilford, S. and O'Sullivan, A. (1998) *The Family Background of Homeless Young People*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Bruegel, I. and

Smith, J. (1999) *Taking Risks: An analysis of the risks of homelessness for young people in London*, London: Safe in the City; Randall,

²⁴ Quilgars, D., Johnsen, S., Pleace, N., (2008) *Youth Homelessness in the UK: A Decade of Progress?* Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Table 3: Main Causes of Youth Homelessness Scotland 2006-2007

	Household categories (%)			Total (%)
	16-17	Parents 16-24	Lone 18-24	
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	55	15	16	19
Other relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate	13	6	10	9
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	7	5	10	7
Violent relationship breakdown with partner	2	21	11	14
Violence in parental home including violent relationship breakdown	1	16	10	11
Lost social rented or tied tenancy	5	7	6	6
Lost private rented sector tenancy or owner-occupied home	1	14	5	8
Discharged from prison	1	1	10	6
Harassment other than racial	1	3	2	3
Overcrowding	<1	1	<1	1
Other	15	12	19	16
Total	100	100	100	100
Base (n)	2,490	9,396	12,741	24,627

Source: Quilgars et al 2008 analysis of HL1 Statistics Scotland

Quilgars *et al*²⁵ examined youth homelessness across the UK, including Scotland. Their research found that the most common reason for young people making a local authority application for homelessness in Scotland is relationship breakdown with parents (19% of applications). However, a violent relationship with a partner, or violence in the parental home, account for the next most common reasons at 14% and 11% respectively. As Table 3 indicates, violent relationship breakdown is particularly prominent amongst younger parents, with 21% of young parents experiencing a violent relationship breakdown and 16% leaving their parental home for this reason. The authors note that ‘the predominance of violence in relationship breakdown was striking’ in this analysis. Although the Scottish data in this study indicated that violence in relationship breakdown appears to be lower for 16-17 year olds, nearly half (45%) of 16 and 17 year olds in a Communities and Local Government survey conducted in England²⁶ (for whom relationship breakdown was a cause of homelessness) stated that violence was a feature of such a breakdown.

Many young people experiencing homelessness had either witnessed or experienced violence within their families when growing up. Two fifths (40%) reported that their parents had been violent towards one another, and a similar proportion (39%) had been victims of domestic violence in their childhood. These experiences were also strongly associated with gender and ethnicity. Young women were more likely to report that their parents had a violent relationship (35% compared to 16% of young men), and in terms of ethnicity, White youths

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Pleace., N., Fitzpatrick., S, and Johnsen (2008) *Statutory Homelessness in England: The experiences of families and 16-17 year olds*. Communities and Local Government. Base 2,053 adult responses, multiple responses were possible.

were more likely to report that their parents had been violent towards each other than other groups.²⁷

Homelessness Legislation Outcomes

Analysis of the outcomes for all households who stated a *violent or abusive dispute* as the main reason for application, shows that around three-fifths of women applying to local authorities in 2008-2009 secured permanent accommodation. The most common outcome was a local authority tenancy with around 24% (323) of single women, and 28% (422) of women with children fleeing a violent or abusive dispute securing this outcome. Around 13% (172) of both single person females and 13% (202) of women with children fleeing a violent or abusive dispute secured a housing association tenancy. Temporary accommodation was only offered to around 2% (24) of single person females and around 1 % (19) of women with children fleeing a *violent or abusive dispute*.

The above data is consistent with findings from the literature review which illustrates that for women fleeing domestic abuse, their housing options are limited, and in most cases the likely route to independent living is via a local authority tenancy. Due to income restraints, these tenancies are most likely to be in the social rented sector. Women whose moves are unplanned and occur as a response to a crisis are at a further disadvantage, whether owner occupiers or previous tenants. They are far more likely to need emergency accommodation or to stay with family and friends. In the longer term, women who are owner-occupiers may be able to become home owners in their own right after a period of temporary accommodation or as tenant. Women who were tenants face the same constraints as those former tenants whose move was planned in terms of accessing quality rented accommodation but may find the process of obtaining this accommodation more problematic because of the uncontrolled manner of leaving the perpetrator.

Women with dependent children face particular difficulties connected with schooling and children's need for stability and security. Given these difficulties, the option of the women remaining in the home and the perpetrator being permanently excluded is attractive. As discussed in section 1 there are legal mechanisms to allow this and local authorities can use domestic abuse as grounds for eviction. However, these measures take time and can leave women in an insecure position and vulnerable to further abuse. It is difficult to gain accurate statistics or other evidence on the extent to which women in Scotland are enabled to remain in the family home, although where police have become involved, this renders the outcome more likely.

The prevention or cessation of domestic abuse in a family context will almost always require the woman to leave that home. For a significant number of

²⁷ The evidence notes that margins of error are too wide with respect to ethnic minority young people survey results to give actual percentages of specific minority groups but the results reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

women, the experience of that abuse results in the loss of their home. Leaving domestic abuse in a partner/cohabitee context means ending a relationship and the evidence has clearly demonstrated that for this reason, many women will leave a relationship a number of times before a final break. The process of leaving a relationship in which a woman experiences domestic abuse may often mean that she has experience of living in a range of situations including family and friends or emergency accommodation on several occasions before she actually achieves a tenancy or permanent accommodation.

Lost contact and returning to perpetrator

However, as Table 1 also shows a significant proportion of women fleeing a violent or abusive dispute either returned to previous/present accommodation, or lost contact prior to assessment decision/withdrew/homelessness resolved. Presumably women who lost contact with the local authority had their homelessness application resolved; either would have returned to the perpetrator, remained living with family or friends, moved elsewhere in the UK or were housed directly by a housing association or the private rented sector. The chart highlights the following non-uptake of housing options available to women who had cited a violent or abusive dispute:

- Nearly 10% of single women and 11% of women with children fleeing a violent or abusive dispute returned to the previous or present accommodation. It is not known if this included the removal of the perpetrator from the previous or present accommodation.
- 46% of single women and 34% of women with children fleeing a violent or abusive dispute either lost contact of some sort with the local authority, withdrew their application, their homelessness application was resolved/withdrew, or the outcome was unknown.

Domestic abuse is also closely associated with repeat homelessness in Scotland²⁸. The main reason for making a homelessness application more than once is that women left their home moving into accommodation that was inadequate for their needs. This can result in the loss of permanent tenancies. In a small piece of research by Shelter²⁹ women experiencing repeat homelessness did so by moving from place to place or tenancy to tenancy- even if it was a permanent tenancy rather than back to the same partner as it evidenced in some of the literature. In this study, fear of the neighbourhood where housing was allocated emerged as the factor most responsible for multiple moves and repeat homelessness applications.

Analysis of the 2008-2009 homelessness statistics for Scotland shows that repeat homelessness accounted for around 11% of the 4,665 cases, who for their priority need category state that the household was *fleeing domestic abuse*. 192 cases had a previous application with a closure date within 12 months of the current case assessment date and where both applications were assessed as

²⁸ Pawson. H.(2001) *Repeat Homelessness*, Scottish Homes

²⁹ Shelter Scotland (2002) *Repeat Homelessness and Domestic Abuse*. Shelter Scotland.

homeless or threatened with homelessness (4% of priority need cases fleeing domestic abuse). 308 women had a previous case closed over 12 months before the current cases assessment date and both applications were assessed as homeless/threatened with homeless (5% of priority need cases fleeing domestic abuse).

Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords

It is not possible from the collection of local authority statistics to identify the proportion of lettings that are made to women fleeing domestic abuse other than lettings made under the homelessness legislation highlighted above.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) are involved in re-housing women fleeing domestic abuse using a number of distinct approaches. Some RSLs are involved in providing refuge accommodation in partnership with Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and many have nomination arrangements with SWA to provide a specified number of housing allocations a year for women coming through the SWA refuge route. In addition, RSLs use a points system which gives priority to women fleeing domestic abuse and who are re-housed through their allocations systems and who may therefore not appear in the SWA's or Homelessness statistics.

SCORE³⁰ data can show the number of RSL lets to women fleeing domestic abuse. It does not however, include women housed from the general allocation or nominated by Local Authorities. SCORE data for 2007-2008³¹ shows that of the 20,810 submitted, 266 applications (1.3) cited domestic abuse as the main reason they required rehousing. SCORE data, like the homelessness statistics, shows that the majority of domestic abuse cases occurred in single women or single parent households, with figures of 50% and 41% respectively. The majority of those houses due to domestic abuse were classed as statutory homeless with 15% not homeless and 12% not classed as not statutorily homeless. 40% of domestic where direct applications and 40% came from Section 5 referrals.

Sanctuary Schemes: an effective housing option?

Sanctuary Schemes are defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government as an innovative approach to homelessness prevention in England. These schemes provide security measures so a woman can remain in her home of she chooses to do so where her partner no longer lives there. There has been national variation in the extent and availability of Sanctuary Schemes across the UK. The development of such schemes has been notably less in Scotland compared to England.

³⁰ SCORE, (Scottish Continuous Recording System) A dataset funded by the Scottish Government and managed by the Centre for Housing Research (CHR), monitors new tenancies granted by registered housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland. Monitoring is undertaken by submission of a lettings log for each new tenancy, which is completed by the landlord together with the tenant. The lettings log records details about the tenancy, the tenant household and the property being let.

³¹ Scottish Continuous Recording System Data- Analysis of 2007/8 data by Housing Statistics, Scottish Government

The development of sanctuary schemes in England has been driven by the Government's homelessness prevention strategy which has set local authorities a target of halving the number of families in temporary accommodation by 2010. There is also evidence to suggest that Sanctuary Schemes provided cost savings for local authorities. In one London borough council, the sanctuary scheme resulted in a 40% reduction in the number of families in temporary accommodations as a result of domestic abuse. This resulted in an estimated saving of over £600,000.³² However, a robust cost-benefit analysis of the effectiveness of the sanctuary scheme model is limited.

There is currently no data on the number of instances of homelessness being prevented through sanctuary provision in England and Wales. However, there is evidence to suggest that uptake has been widespread with half of England's local authorities having reported operating a scheme in 2007.³³ In Scotland, to date, only one Sanctuary Scheme has been developed and evaluated - the *Edinburgh Safe As Houses* project.

Sanctuary initiatives in England have been heavily criticised by Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) and other commentators. SWAs concern is that the development of these schemes have been driven by the need to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation rather than from an informed and integrated policy response to tackling domestic abuse. SWA expressed further unease about other aspects of the scheme:

- Women's and children's safety can often be more at risk outside the home and that measures are needed for them to feel safe and secure in their communities, not only in their property such as on the way to work or to school.
- They cite anecdotal evidence from Women's Aid groups in England that coercive practices at housing options interviews results in women having to accept sanctuary schemes, thus preventing them from getting a homelessness interview and accessing temporary accommodation.

Other commentators³⁴ have also criticised these schemes, mainly on the grounds that women may be coerced into accepting such help without properly being informed of their legal rights. Netto *et al*³⁵ argue that key questions remain including: the extent to which women offered sanctuary provision are made aware that if they actually abandon their homes in fear of domestic abuse, they could be owed full rehousing duty; and, how far the choices now open to women facing domestic abuse have actually addressed the power imbalances which lie behind the phenomenon.

³² Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) Options for setting up a Sanctuary Scheme.

³³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2007) Homelessness Statistics June 2007.

³⁴ Levison, D. and Kenny, D. (2002) *Reducing Domestic Violence...what works?* Accommodation Provisions; Home Office.

³⁵ Netto., G, Pawson., H., Sharp., C (not in print) *Preventing homelessness due to domestic violence: providing a safe space or closing the door to new possibilities?*

However, an initial appraisal³⁶ of the Sanctuary Schemes indicate that when appropriately targeted, the schemes do widen the range of options open to women facing homelessness due to domestic abuse, many of whom would have been faced with the choice of either fleeing to a refuge or continuing to endure abuse. Netto *et al's* initial research had indicated that sanctuary schemes have the potential to increase women's sense of safety from physical threat, ensure their continuing access to key services and linked them to relevant support services. However despite these benefits, Sanctuary Schemes appear to operate on the assumption that women will take responsibility for ensuring continuing safety such as calling the police themselves, shifting to "an increasing individual responsibility compared to traditional forms of support through refuge or temporary accommodation".³⁷

The evaluation³⁸ of the Scottish Sanctuary Scheme demonstrated that this kind of approach *did* provide a valuable option for women who may otherwise become homeless due to domestic violence; however, this was offered as another housing option and as part of the housing option approach. Further, women experiencing domestic violence value the option to remain in their home. For many women moving to avoid domestic violence is not a feasible option, partly due to the scale of smaller cities such as Edinburgh where it is relatively easy to track people down and also often due to continued shared parenting responsibilities.

The evaluation also showed that greater security in the home and the wider neighbourhood contact provided an immediate impact on women's and children's lives. The project also worked as a broker and this has been an important part of the approach. *Safe as Houses* has demonstrated that it is possible to break the link between domestic violence and homelessness, at least in the short term. Whilst not seen as a way of preventing domestic violence, there may also be a beneficial 'demonstration' effect on perpetrators, women themselves, and children, because it conveys a clear message that domestic violence is unacceptable. Case studies of women who have used the service in Scotland suggest that they have gained greater personal safety, considerable confidence and wellbeing for themselves and their children.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. page 11.

³⁸ Sharp. C., (2008) *City of Edinburgh Council Safe As Houses Evaluation* as part of Scottish Government Homelessness Prevention Innovation Fund Evaluation. Unpublished report.

Key lessons which emerged from the pilot's evaluation are highlighted below:

Key Lessons from Edinburgh Safe as Houses Pilot³⁹

Make it a core part of business

There is strong support amongst both the service users and agencies for extending this option as part of an advice-led approach to homelessness prevention. Ensuring that this kind of option is offered more widely is seen by agencies as an essential part of preparing the ground for the abolition of priority need in 2012. There will be even fewer re-housing options as pressures on the available housing stock increase.

Retain a coordination role

The coordination role of the project has been built on the success of building and managing a range of complex and sensitive relationships and this is valued by all the stakeholders, service users, other agencies, and contractors. Other models of provision could extend the 'reach' of the project by being more local and visible. One suggestion is that the option could be accessed through local housing offices, although agencies suggest that there would still be a need for coordination. A key dual benefit of this way of working has been the ability to broker positive relationships 'on the ground', and to retain a strategic perspective; building up expertise and up to date knowledge about what other services are available. However, this is a difficult approach to sustain in the longer term and larger scale. If this approach is rolled out a key challenge will be how to enhance the skills and capacities of staff to recognise cases where this may be a suitable option and to make appropriate referrals.

Maintain the link with strategic partnership working

In developing the approach that has been piloted, there will clearly be a need for the City of Edinburgh Council to communicate how the *Safe as Houses* approach fits in as part of an advice-led housing options approach, so that considering this as a potential option for people seeking advice becomes part of the way that advisors work, rather than perceiving it as an extra service responsibility.

Retain the focus on domestic abuse

Linked to the fear of abuse of the offer of the installation of security measures and acknowledgement of the extent of need is a desire to retain the focus on domestic violence, rather than extending it to cover other instances of violence, harassment and anti-social behaviour.

Evidence on the expansion of sanctuary schemes across local authorities in England and Wales calls into question the extent to which other forms of vulnerability to homelessness either maintain or create new forms of gender-based inequality. Further research is required to provide a robust assessment of

³⁹ Ibid.

the effectiveness of Sanctuary Schemes in supporting women threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse, should the Scottish Government wish to explore the rapid uptake of Sanctuary Schemes as a viable policy option for Local Authorities . At the time of writing this review, the Department for Communities and Local Government Analytical Service has commissioned research into the effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic violence to remain in their own homes. The project will evaluate a number of case study sanctuary schemes in order to identify what works. The research is expected to be completed and published in early 2010.

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE ON THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Provision of Housing Support

The provision of the types of support given to women under the homelessness legislation is collected in the homelessness statistics. Analysis of the 2008-2009 homelessness data shows that 27% of *priority need* cases stated that they were *fleeing domestic* abuse, and also identified a support need. Of the 27%, 47% were from single women and 28% from women with children. The most common support need was a mental health problem, for both groups of women, followed by basic housing management/living skills. This includes those who need to learn about the management of household finances or other aspects of living independently. It is likely to apply to many people who have not had a home of their own before, or for a number of years, as well as to others who have found it difficult to maintain a tenancy. Single women fleeing domestic abuse/violence were also more likely to identify drug or alcohol dependency (147 cases) compared to women with children (55 cases).

In Scotland, two influential studies on domestic abuse were conducted on housing and homelessness and the housing support needs of these households. These were the quality of Refuge provision⁴⁰ and the ability of women to sustain tenancies on being re-housed following domestic abuse. No research has been undertaken since then.

Refuge Provision

On refuges, Scottish Women's Aid (SWA) report⁴¹ that there are 505 household places (household defined as a space for a woman/woman and her children) in Scotland. Of these, 223 are shared and 286 are self-contained. This is a reduction from 520 household spaces provided as refuge accommodation from Scottish Women's Aid's survey due to the closure of accommodation provided as refuges to women's aid in Aberdeen and Falkirk.

Scottish HL2 Homelessness Statistics at 31 December 2009 showed there were 123 households in Scotland in Women's Refuge accommodation, 78 of which were households with pregnant women or dependent children, and the total number of dependent children in these households was 128.

⁴⁰ Fitzpatrick., S., Lynch, E., Goodlad., R with Houghton, C., (2003) *Refuges for Women, Children and Young People in Scotland: A Research Report*. Scottish Executive.

⁴¹ Communities Analytical Services (2010) Reporting on Progress Towards Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men Made by Public Authorities in Scotland: Ministerial Priorities for Gender Equality: Tackling Violence Against Women: A Review of Key Evidence and National Policies. Scottish Government.

According to figures reported by SWA⁴², 23% of refuge requests in Scotland were accommodated by women's aid groups and, the extent to which Local Authority areas were able to meet refuge requests for women and their children varied across Scotland; most groups accommodated fewer than 1 out of 3 women and their children who requested refuge during the year 2006-07. Scottish Women's Aid reported that lack of refuge space (68%) was the primary reason why women and children were not admitted to refuge and this lack of refuge space meant that women's aid groups were unable to accommodate half of the children and young people for whom refuge was requested. However, when women left the refuge between April 2006 to March 2007 more than 1 in 3 were re-housed in either council, housing association or privately owned properties. Only 16% returned to their partners.

A Scotland-wide study on refuge provision provided by the Women's Aid Network found that standards within refuge provision varied by type of accommodation, including traditional shared refuges, cluster refuges and dispersed flats.⁴³ The most preferred form of refuge amongst women, children and workers was that of cluster refuges, with a minority preferring dispersed flats. Most women interviewed were positive about the practical and emotional support received and expressed a preference for on-site support and access to 24-hour emergency support. Provision for children was also largely positively commented on, although it was found that there was scope for more contact with support workers. However, only one third of the Women's Aid groups felt they had sufficient resources to provide needed support for refuge residents.

Fitzgerald et al also found that Women's Aid groups in Scotland reported greatest difficulties in accommodating women with drug and alcohol problems, women with male children over the age of 16, women with serious mental health problems and asylum-seekers, suggesting that specialist provision may be needed.

United Kingdom-wide research⁴⁴ has found that accessing refuge accommodation in a preferred location can prove problematic, due to the overall shortage of provision. Further, their research showed that women leaving home due to domestic abuse often faced problems in accessing appropriate support, highlighting the importance of timely and pro-active early intervention.

⁴² Scottish Women's Aid (2007) *Annual Statistics Report 2006-2007*.

⁴³ Fitzpatrick., S., Lynch, E., Goodlad., R with Houghton, C., (2003) *Refuges for Women, Children and Young People in Scotland: A Research Report*. Scottish Executive.

⁴⁴ Levison, D. and Kenny, D. (2002) *Reducing Domestic Violence....what works? Accommodation Provisions*; Home Office.

Tenancy Sustainment

Edgar *et al's* research on '*Sustaining Tenancies Following Domestic Abuse*⁴⁵ highlighted the housing problems and needs of women trying to leave violent men. Most women in this situation spend some time in temporary or refuge accommodation before finding alternative housing. Despite this, most who are re-housed as a result of domestic abuse managed to sustain tenancies. This was despite almost all of them being offered tenancies in difficult to let areas, sometimes close to the former home and accessible to their partner.⁴⁶ Those with no choice but to accept often demonstrated great resilience in sustaining them. Where tenancies failed, the research found that it tended to be because of harassment and/or re-engagement with the perpetrator of abuse.⁴⁷ They highlighted that the most important factor in the success of a tenancy was the quality of the dwelling and especially the characteristics of the neighbourhood. The researchers argued that to be able to leave a violent partner and achieve sustainable housing, women in this situation were likely to require support on four different levels: housing support; social support; personal support and information and advice.⁴⁸

Children and Young People's Support Needs

Specific research examining the support needs of children and young people leaving home as a result of domestic abuse is underdeveloped and limited.

Scottish Women's Aid has however undertaken some recent research into children's experiences of having moved home as a result of domestic abuse which included interviews with 30 young people. Key themes identified in the research were bullying, problems making new friends, changing schools, leaving possessions behind, feeling sad and lonely. Older young people seemed to carry more concern about relationship issues in their families, for example, having to choose between parents. All mentioned the importance of being able to talk to someone outside the family.

Other research⁴⁹ found that the actual move from home to refuge could involve leaving family, friends, as well as changing school, sometimes on many occasions. This might mean leaving 'everything that gave their daily lives structure, meaning and consistency – in order to be safe'. The research revealed cases where children had moved without being able to take any or few possessions and highlighted that support often came from family members, primarily mothers and siblings but also extended family members. However, support from mothers and siblings were often general and reassuring because of

⁴⁵ Edgar, B., Williams., N., McMahon, L., and McAvoy, S. (2003) *Sustaining Tenancies Following Domestic Abuse*. University of Dundee.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mullender, A., Hague, G (2003) *Children's Perspective on Domestic Violence*. London:Sage.

the difficulties of being able to acknowledge the specifics of what was going on. Some of the children also found support in extended family who provided 'physical and emotional sanctuary' and a place where children could escape.⁵⁰

Previous research suggests that while refuge is a source of support, reactions to refuge life could be mixed. Mullender and Hague's research revealed that after family support, refuge was the most valued source of support. Fitzpatrick et al's research into refuge provision in Scotland reported children airing anxieties about going to refuge, though some had positive views. For example, some children said that the refuge was '*brilliant*' and '*everyone's nice*'; others had 'not experienced [refuges] as bad places'⁵¹ or 'not as horrible as they had feared',⁵² Young people did report feeling that they and their mother were safe in refuge.⁵³

More negatively, services and facilities were often dependent on the physical presence of the children's worker; for example, the playroom could be locked at evenings and weekends. Older children complained about lack of appropriate facilities for their age group. Fitzpatrick *et al* acknowledge this in their recommendations, urging increasing access to children's workers, and the provision of space for older children. Prior research⁵⁴ suggests that children also enjoyed the company of other children in refuge. However, others complained of loneliness and boredom in circumstances where there were no peers there. Some children and young people did have difficulties with other children, whilst others voiced their dislike of the overcrowding and having to share facilities, particularly bathrooms, with other families. Some mentioned other restrictions such as the difficulties in being able to see friends from outside refuge, not being able to bring friends back, and having to keep the location secret which could cause difficulty and embarrassment.⁵⁵ Some children and young people were restricted in the extent to which they could go out for security reasons. Mullender and Hague⁵⁶ have provided a concise overview of the issues emerging from children who had recently left situations where there has been domestic abuse:

As well as distress and fear, children revealed their resilience and coping strategies, for example when moving home and school, with the consequent disruptions to their family and friendship networks. Talking

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Fitzpatrick., S., Lynch, E., Goodlad., R with Houghton, C., (2003) *Refuges for Women, Children and Young People in Scotland: A Research Report*. Scottish Executive.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Mullender, A., Hague, G (2003) *Children's Perspective on Domestic Violence*. London:Sage.

⁵⁵ See Mullender, A., Hague, G (2003) *Children's Perspective on Domestic Violence*. London:Sage and Fitzpatrick., S., Lynch, E., Goodlad., R with Houghton, C., (2003) *Refuges for Women, Children and Young People in Scotland: A Research Report*. Scottish Executive.

⁵⁶ Mullender, A., Hague, G (2003) *Children's Perspective on Domestic Violence*. London:Sage.

about refuges, it seemed that these losses and the further restrictions (over-crowding, younger children being a nuisance, not being able to have friend back because of keeping the locations secret) were, for many, outweighed by finally being safe... Where children and young people appreciated life in refuge, children's workers were key to this need page numbers for quotes Also quote is too long.

The children's worker was absolutely vital, a key person that children and young people could talk to about domestic abuse and where they could openly express their feelings. They also often organised activities for children and needed to be present for the children to be able to use children's facilities in refuges. Consequently, children often wanted more access to children's workers (e.g. at the weekend) for both practical and emotional reasons. Fitzpatrick also found that children who had contact with statutory agencies were more ambivalent overall and more critical of how they had been dealt with by these services.

The Scottish Executive established the Children's Services Women's Aid Fund in 2005 in response to the identified need for specialist workers to offer direct support to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. The Fund invested £6m between 2006/7 and 2007/8 and a further £11.9m was allocated for the period 2008-2011. The workers were intended to support children and young people in refuge and when moving on from refuge and also to offer an outreach service to children and young people who were not in refuge. An evaluation of the first two years of the fund found that progress had been made in increasing the number of dedicated hours children's workers spent with children and young people and that, in general, staff, children and mothers, local authority partners and other stakeholders seemed satisfied with the levels of support, although a minority of children reported wanting to spend more time with children's support workers. There was widespread agreement that services were flexibly delivered, child centred and tailored to meet the needs of children and young people. There was evidence of out of hours and weekend contact at the level children wanted, although, a sizeable minority of children would have liked support workers around at times other than they were.

SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSION

Statutory protection for women and children experiencing domestic abuse is relatively strong, providing legal entitlement to housing; however it is not clear from the evidence whether the scale of provision of housing and support matches the scale of need. The evidence review has identified research undertaken in Scotland during 2003, in particular this focused on tenancy sustainment and an evaluation of refuge provision. Little is known, however, about whether provision *since then* meets the needs of women and children at risk of domestic abuse in Scotland. There has been, for example, no mapping of the range of approaches and strategies in local authorities or evaluative research on the effectiveness of various housing options available to those at risk.

There is some new evidence being developed on the effectiveness of schemes to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes but this is related to the Sanctuary Scheme model in England and Wales, and therefore there is no evidence on the extent of this provision in Scotland and the key factors in ensuring this is a safe and sustainable options for households at risk of domestic abuse.

Overall, the existing evidence identifies the scale of domestic abuse as a contributory factor to homelessness but does not establish the *extent or scale of* provision in Scotland or how current needs are being met.

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ISBN 978-0-7559-9717-6

APS Group Scotland
DPPAS10836 (10/10)